

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

United States of America,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 18-20315

v.

Judith E. Levy

United States District Judge

Nathaniel Cotton (D-2),

Elizabeth A. Stafford

Defendant.

Magistrate Judge

_____/

**ORDER DENYING DEFENDANT NATHANIEL COTTON'S
MOTION FOR COMPASSIONATE RELEASE [129] AND
RESOLVING DEFENDANT'S MOTION TO ENTER EVIDENCE
[141]**

Before the Court is Defendant's request for compassionate release from FCI Milan due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. (ECF No. 129.) For the following reasons, Defendant's motion is DENIED.

Also before the Court is Defendant's April 2, 2021 Motion to Enter Evidence, in which Defendant asks that his January 13, 2021 order of warrant revocation be "entered." (ECF No. 141.) The Court acknowledges receipt of this document and resolves the motion.

Background

On November 30, 2020, the Court sentenced Defendant to 78 months' imprisonment after he pled guilty to one count of Maintaining a Drug Premises, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 856(a)(1), and one count of Possession with Intent to Distribute Controlled Substances, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 846. (ECF No. 120.)

On March 2, 2021, Defendant moved for compassionate release and/or reduction of his sentence pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(i), arguing that the danger posed to him by the COVID-19 pandemic due to his high blood pressure, prediabetes, high cholesterol, childhood asthma, obesity, chronic smoking, knee problems, and stomach complications constitutes an "extraordinary and compelling reason" for release. (ECF No. 129.) The United States responded in opposition to the motion on March 26, 2021 and April 22, 2021. (ECF Nos. 132, 146.) In addition to the legal filings, the United States provided a copy of Defendant's vaccine consent form indicating that, after being provided a copy of the COVID-19 Vaccine Emergency Use Authorization Fact Sheet, Defendant declined to receive the first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine on April 20, 2021.

(ECF No. 146-2, PageID.990.) The declined consent form does not indicate the reason for Defendant’s refusal. (*See id.*)

Analysis

Compassionate-release motions require a “three-step” inquiry:

First, the Court must “find that extraordinary and compelling reasons warrant a sentence reduction”;

Second, the Court must “ensure that such a reduction is consistent with applicable policy statements issued by the Sentencing Commission”; and

Finally, the Court must “consider all relevant sentencing factors listed in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a).”

United States v. Elias, 984 F.3d 516, 518 (6th Cir. 2021). “If each of these requirements are met, the district court may reduce the term of imprisonment. 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A).” *Id.*

The Court denies Defendant’s motion for compassionate release because his access to the COVID-19 vaccine mitigates the concern about extraordinary and compelling medical conditions that might otherwise compel release. Courts in this circuit have consistently refused to find extraordinary and compelling medical circumstances when a defendant declines the COVID-19 vaccine. *See, e.g., United States v. Goston*, No. 15-20694 (E.D. Mich. Mar. 9, 2021) (Levy, J.); *United States v. Macgregor*,

No. 15-20093 (E.D. Mich. Mar. 12, 2021) (Leitman, J.); *United States v. Ervin*, No. 14-000195 (M.D. Tenn. Mar. 5, 2021) (Richardson, J.). Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advise that the Pfizer vaccine is 95% effective at preventing COVID-19 in individuals who have not previously contracted COVID-19, and “[e]fficacy [i]s similarly high in a secondary analysis including participants [with] evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection.” *The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices’ Interim Recommendation for Use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine—United States, December 2020*, Centers for Disease Control (Jan. 28, 2021) https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950e2.htm?s_cid=mm6950e2_w.

Because there are no extraordinary and compelling reasons for release, the Court need not consider the remaining compassionate release factors at this time. *See Elias*, 984 F.3d at 518.

Accordingly, Defendant’s motion is DENIED.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: April 23, 2021
Ann Arbor, Michigan

s/Judith E. Levy
JUDITH E. LEVY
United States District Judge

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned certifies that the foregoing document was served upon counsel of record and any unrepresented parties via the Court's ECF System to their respective email or First Class U.S. mail addresses disclosed on the Notice of Electronic Filing on April 23, 2021.

s/William Barkholz
WILLIAM BARKHOLZ
Case Manager